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DEVOTED TO THE PROPAGANDA OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

Meditation

SKEPTICAL THOUGHTS OF A HINDOO PRINCE.

(By A. C. Lyall.)

All the world over, I wonder, in lands that I never have trod,
Are the people eternally seeking for the signs and steps of a
God?

Westward across the ocean, and northward ayont the snow,
Do they all stand gazing, as ever, and what do the wisest
know?

Here in this mystical India, the deities hover and swarm,
Like wild bees heard in the tree tops, or the gusts of a
gathering storm;

In the air men hear their voices, their feet on the rocks are
seen,

Yet we all say, "Whence is the message, and what may the
wonders mean?"

A million shrines stand open, and ever the censer swings,
As they bow to a mystic symbol, or the figures of ancient
kings,

And the incense rises ever, and rises the endless cry
Of those who are heavy laden, and of cowards loth to die.

For the destiny drives us together, like deer in the pass
of the hills,

Above is the sky, and around us the sound and shot that kills;
Pushed by a Power we see not, and struck by a hand un-
known,

We pray to the trees for shelter and press our lips to a stone.

The trees wave a shadowy answer and the rock frowns hol-
low and grim,

And the form and the nod of a demon are caught in the
twilight dim,

And we look at the sunlight falling afar on the mountain
crest;

Is there never a path runs upward to a refuge there and a
rest?

The path, ah! who has shown it, and who is the faithful
guide?

The haven, ah! who has known it, for steep is the mountain
side;

For ever the shot strikes surely, and ever the wasted breath
Of the praying multitude rises, and whose answer is only
death.

Here are the tombs of my kinsfolks, the first of an ancient
name,

Chiefs who were slain on the warfield, and women who died
in flame;

They are gods, these kings of the foretime, they are spirits
who guard our race,
Ever I watch and worship; they sit with a marble face.

And the myriad idols around me, and the legion of mutter-
ings priests,

The revels and rites unholy, the dark, unspeakable feasts,
What have they wrung from the silence? Hath ever a
whisper come

Of the secret? Whence and whither? Alas! for the gods
are dumb.

Shall I list to the word of the English, who come from the
uttermost sea?

The Secret? Hath it been told you, and what is your mes-
sage to me?

It is naught but the wide-world story, how the earth and the
heavens began,

How the gods are glad and angry and the deity once was a
man.

I had thought, "Perchance in the cities, where the rulers
of India dwell,

Whose orders flash from the far lands, who girdle the earth
with a spell,

They have fathomed the depths we float on, they have
measured the unknown main,"

Sadly they turn from the venture and say that the quest is
vain.

Is life then a dream and delusion, and where shall the
dreamer awake?

Is the world seen like shadows on water? And what if the
mirror break?

Shall it pass as a camp that is struck, as a tent that is
gathered and gone?

From the sands that were lamplit at eve and at morning are
level and lone?

Is there naught in the heavens above whence the rain and
the leaven are hurled

But the wind that is swept around us by the rush of the
rolling world?

The wind that shall scatter my ashes, and bear me to
silence and sleep,

With the dirge and the sound of lamenting and the voice
of women who weep.